

**Building a Better Library Website through Usability Testing
(A.K.A. Easy wins for your website!)**

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The purpose of this workshop is to explore how you can make your library's website better through usability testing. By the end of our time together, you'll be able to describe three major types of usability testing.

You can find the slides, handout, and a few other things at www.wccls.org/presentations. I plan to also share them on OLA Sched and NW Central.

So, let's get started!

Your library website

Think about your library website. Not the catalog, which is controlled mostly by the vendor, but the part that you have or might have some control over. Let's see what you have in there.



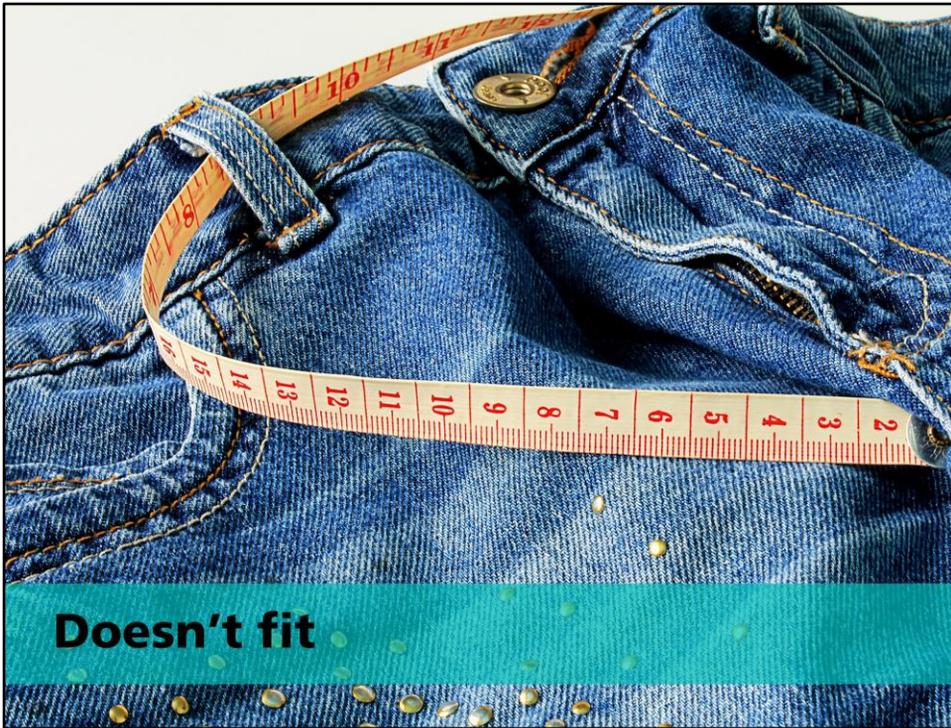
Content people rely on (Example: address, hours, phone numbers, link to catalog)



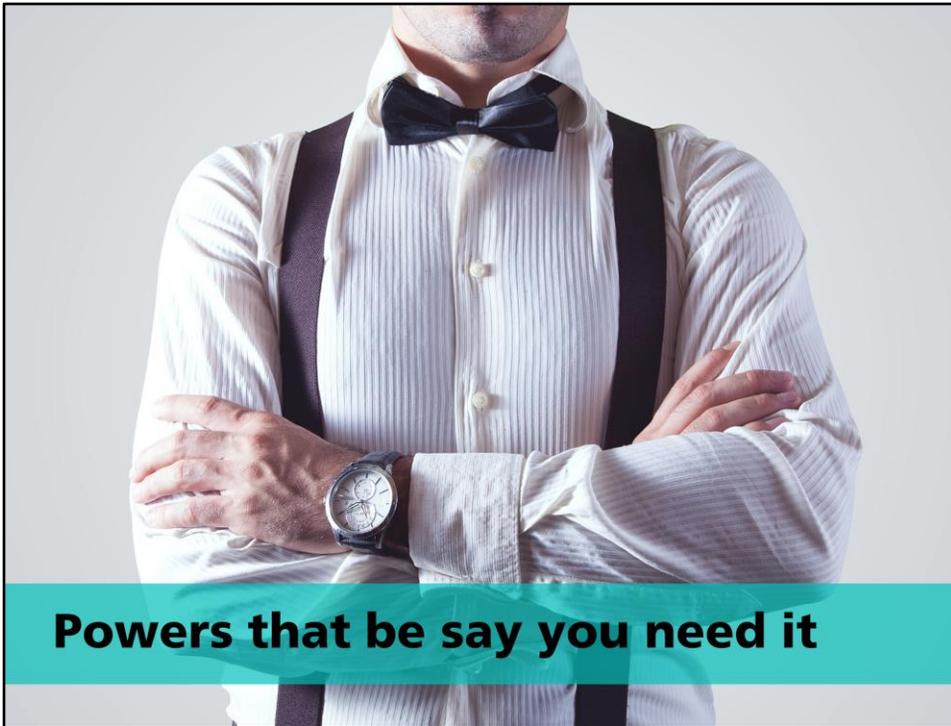
Not used so often, but special information at point of need (Example: Homebound Services)



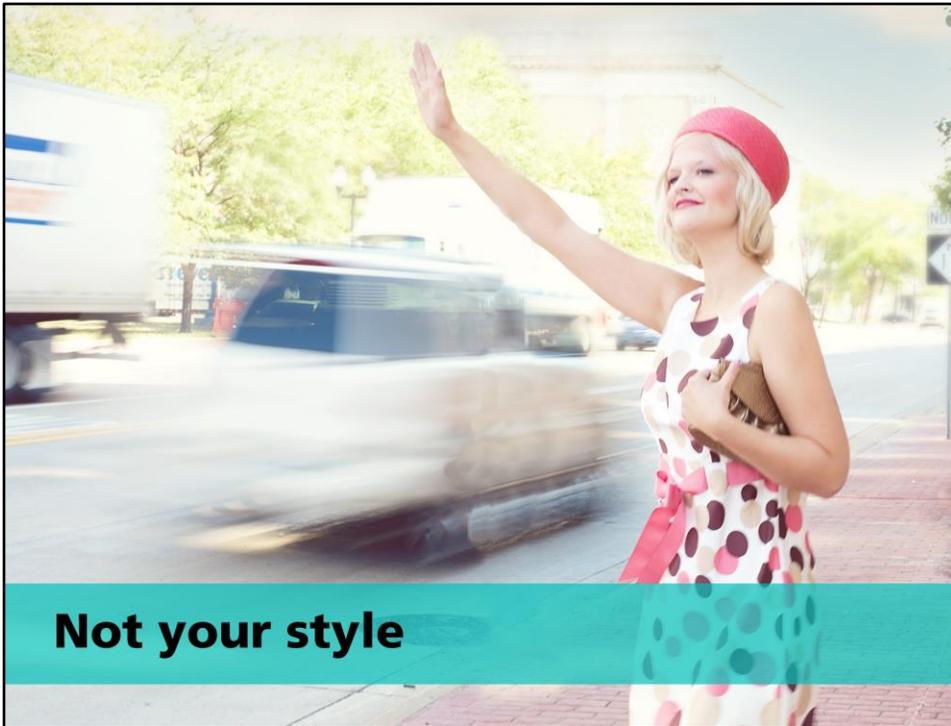
Content that repeats across your site. This is okay if relevant and using a content management system; otherwise you have version control issues. (Example: contact information)



Content you've outgrown, or that outgrew you (Example: e-book help)



Something to please the powers-that-be, but not super useful (Example: Links to partner organizations)



Content that doesn't really fit the scope of your organization (Example: links to online games for kids to play)



Content that is so out of date it's a little scary (Example: how-to videos for the catalog from more than two versions back)



Broken links, broken images (Example: previous teen page)



Content that you wonder “how did that get on there?” (Example?)

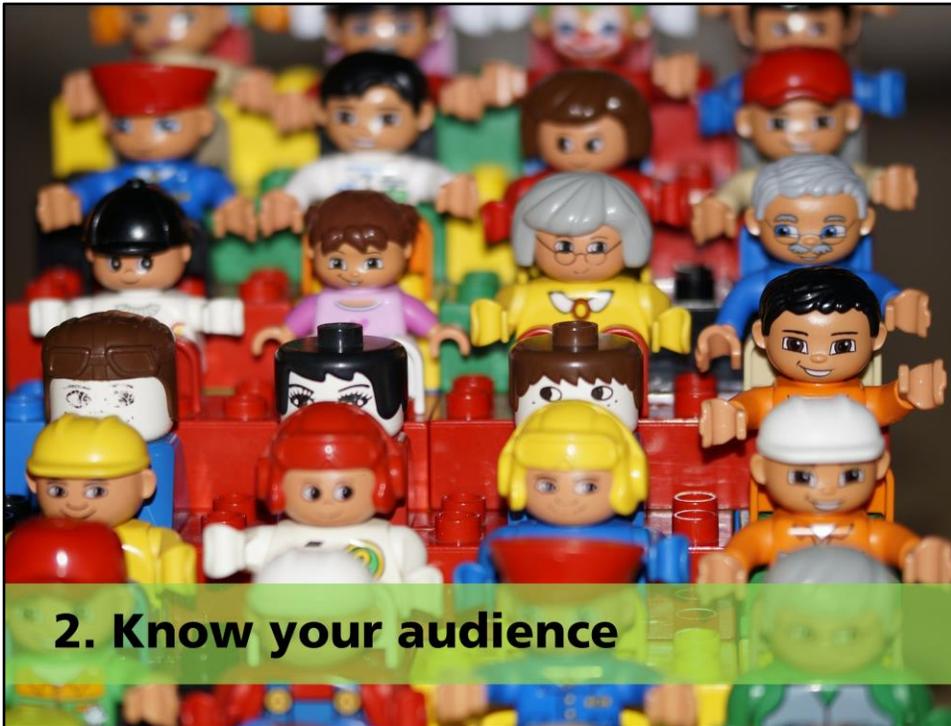
BEFORE Usability Testing

Before we talk about three ways to do usability testing, I want to mention four helpful things to do before you start testing.



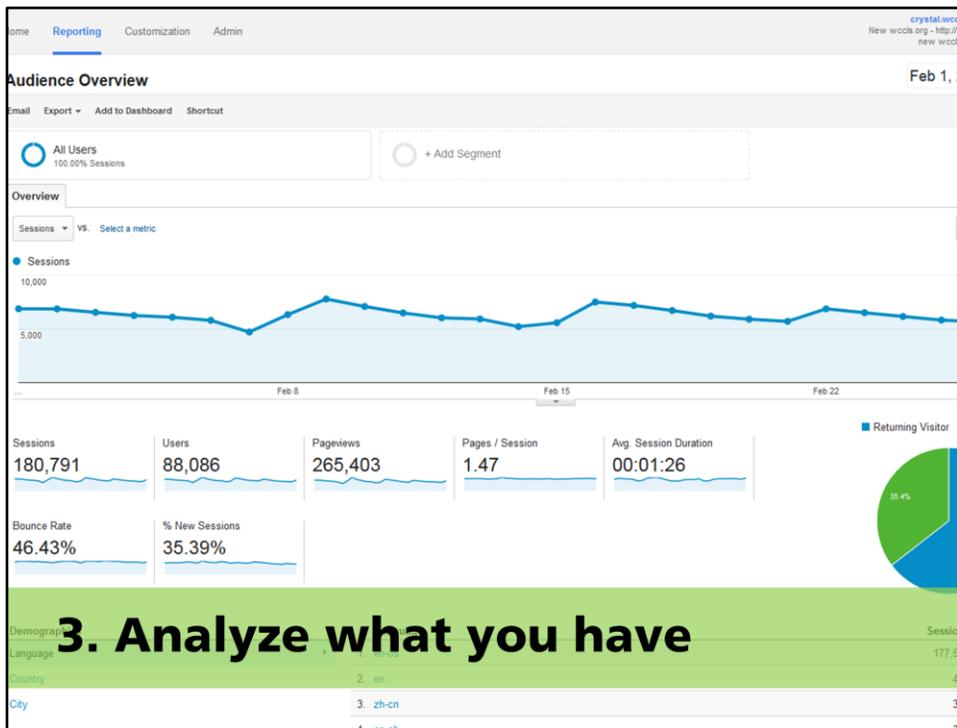
Nothing is exempt from scrutiny. Look critically at every page, or get someone new to do it. If you're used to something, you won't see it anymore.

WCCLS did a content review and created a collection development plan to help decide what content to keep. (More info at wccs.org/presentations.)



2. Know your audience

We learned from Google Analytics that library staff make up 20% of our users. So although they had a LOT of opinions, which are valuable, they do not make up the majority of our users. We needed to make sure we specifically targeted our patrons.



3. Analyze what you have

Google analytics tells you part of the story, which is how people use your site as it is. You can make some changes based on analytics alone, especially regarding weeding your website.

A very recent example for us is that I noticed that several of our website's top 50 search terms for the past three months were for things related specifically to Hillsboro Library, but unfortunately didn't yield the correct search results. After OLA, I'm planning to contact Hillsboro to see if they'd like to change the information blurb on their location page, so that these search terms will land patrons at the correct library, and even link to what those users are actually looking for.

New wccls.org survey

Please select (up to) 5 tasks you regularly do when visiting wccls.org. Rank them in order, 1 being the task you do most often.

Use the "other" box to indicate any task(s) you frequently do that isn't already listed.

	1	2	3	4	5
Search the library catalog	<input type="radio"/>				
Member library information (address, hours, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>				
E-books (3M and Library2Go)	<input type="radio"/>				
Online Resources (databases, such as Reference USA)	<input type="radio"/>				
Library card account information and policies	<input type="radio"/>				
Children's program information	<input type="radio"/>				
Other library program information	<input type="radio"/>				
Cultural Pass information	<input type="radio"/>				

4. Take a survey

Surveys tell you what content is important to people, which may not always match your analytics, but still is an important piece of the puzzle. This can reveal your “black swan,” which is unique content that perhaps isn’t used often, but is vitally important when needed.

In our Extranet survey, we were surprised to learn that half of people browse for information, and half use the search function almost exclusively. This meant we needed to give more attention to search to make sure it is working well.

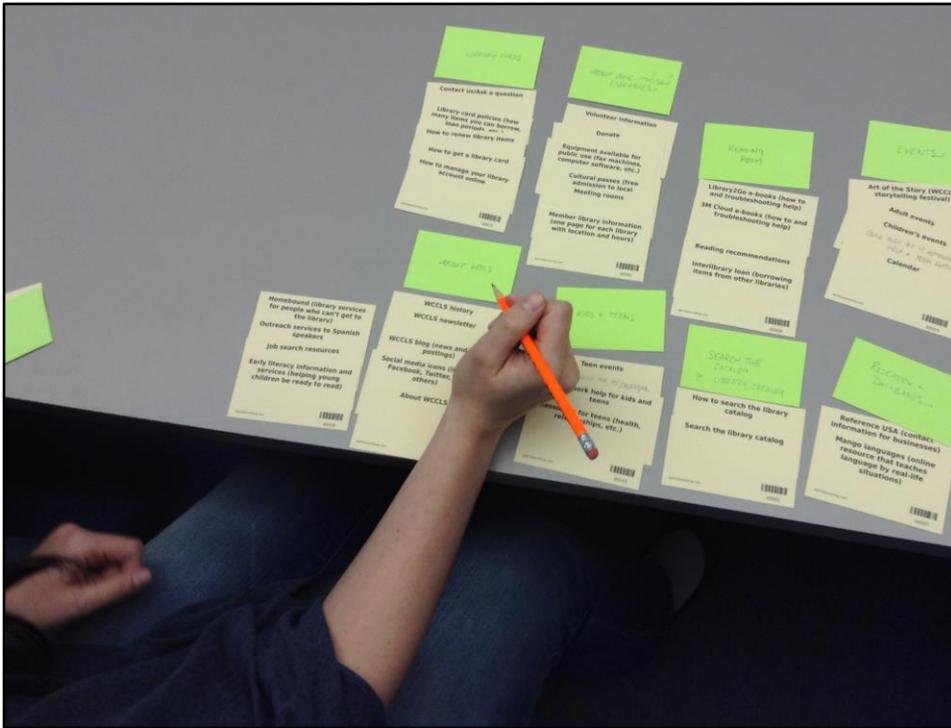
1. Card Sorts

There are fancy types of usability testing with one-way mirrors, and eyeball tracking, but we're going to talk about three simple (and free or inexpensive) things you can do.

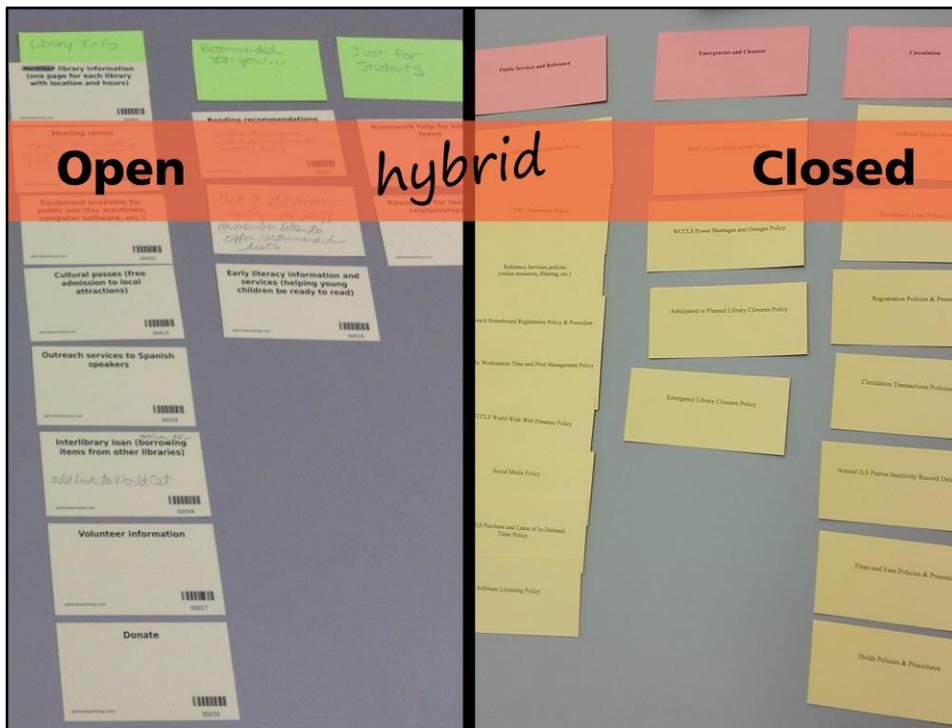
The first kind of test we'll talk about is Card Sorts. A card sort tells you how your users group information together, and what they call it. It's a great first step for creating or testing your menu navigation.



The first step is to take your website, break it into content, and write it on cards. Participants then group the cards in a way that makes sense to them, and create category cards for each group.



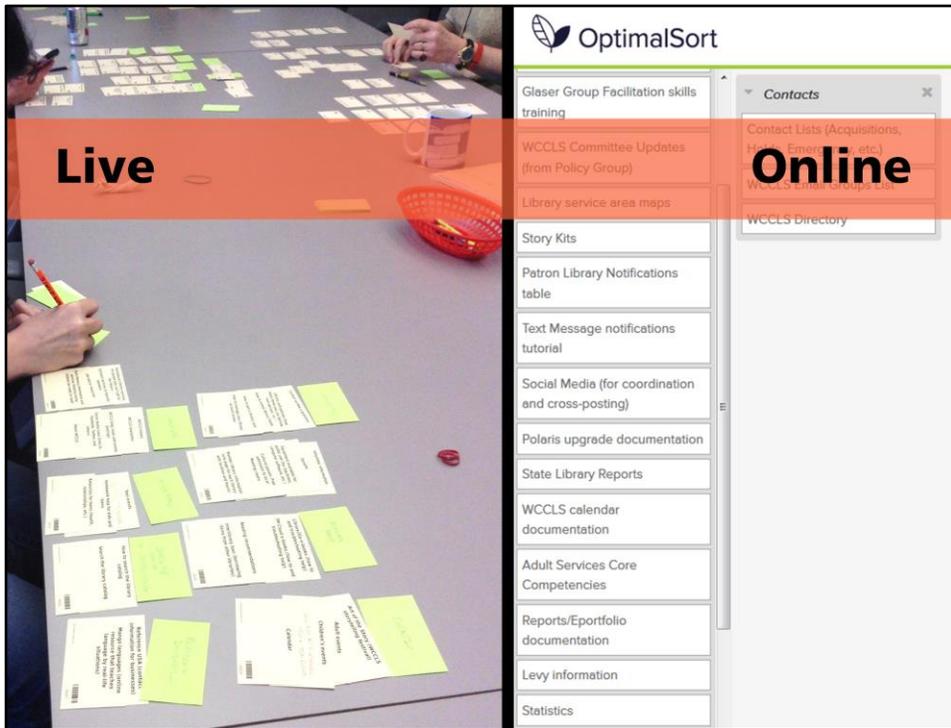
Once participants have completed the sort, then you can look for similarities and “aha” moments. You have several options with card sorts, depending on which meets your needs.



“Open” card sorts ask participants to create category names. This can be helpful for when you have no clue what to call something!

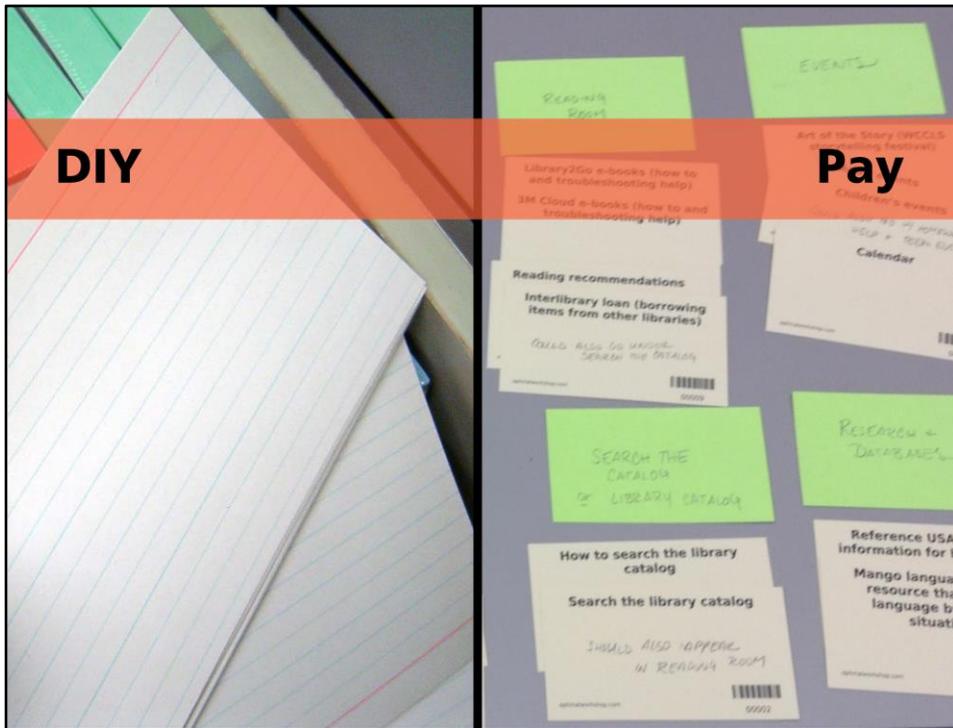
“Closed” card sorts ask participants to match content to pre-determined category names. This is most helpful when you’re fairly certain what the menu navigation terms will be, and you want to be sure the correct content is listed under each term.

You can also do a “hybrid” card sort, where some category terms are pre-determined, but participants have the option to add new ones.



You can ask live participants to do card sorts with paper cards. This is nice because you can hear comments as they work and ask them to clarify afterwards.

You can use an online product to do a click and drag card sort. It can be easier to recruit participants this way because it is less of a time commitment.



DIY card sorts allow flexibility and don't cost very much in supplies – index cards in different colors.

Online versions cost money, but really pay off in time spent with analysis.

We use a company called Optimal Workshop, which has several usability tests. This one is called OptimalSort.

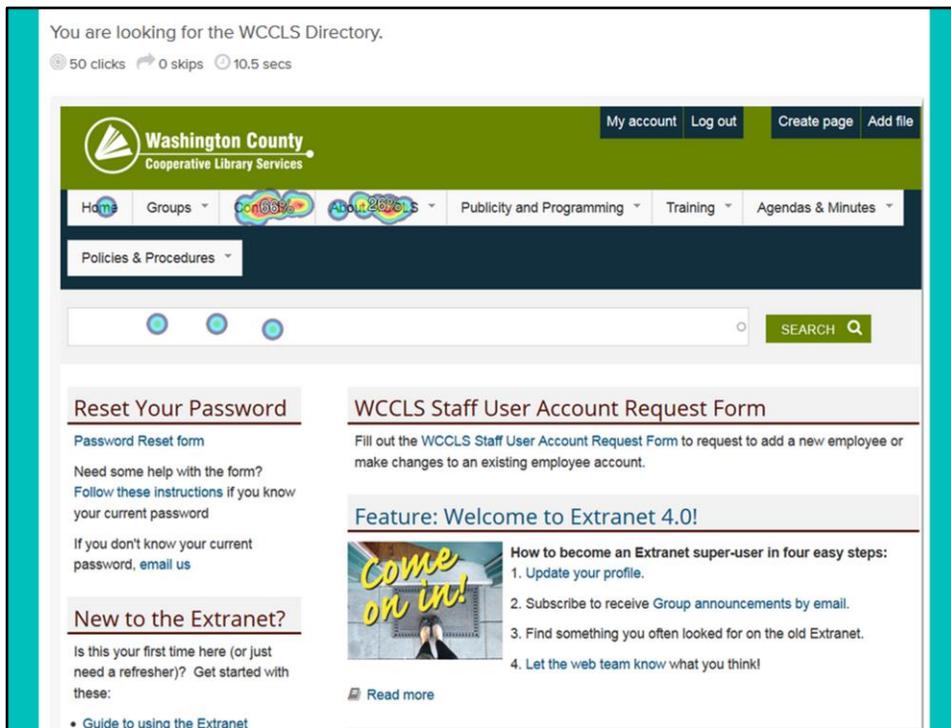
We pay \$109 per month that we are conducting testing, and can do unlimited tests during that time. We still have access to our data after we unsubscribe, which is nice.

See the barcodes in the photo on the right? OptimalSort gives you a template for printing cards and then scanning them with a barcode reader. This way you can do a paper card sort or an online sort (or both), and have the benefit of using their analysis tools, instead of a gigantic spreadsheet.

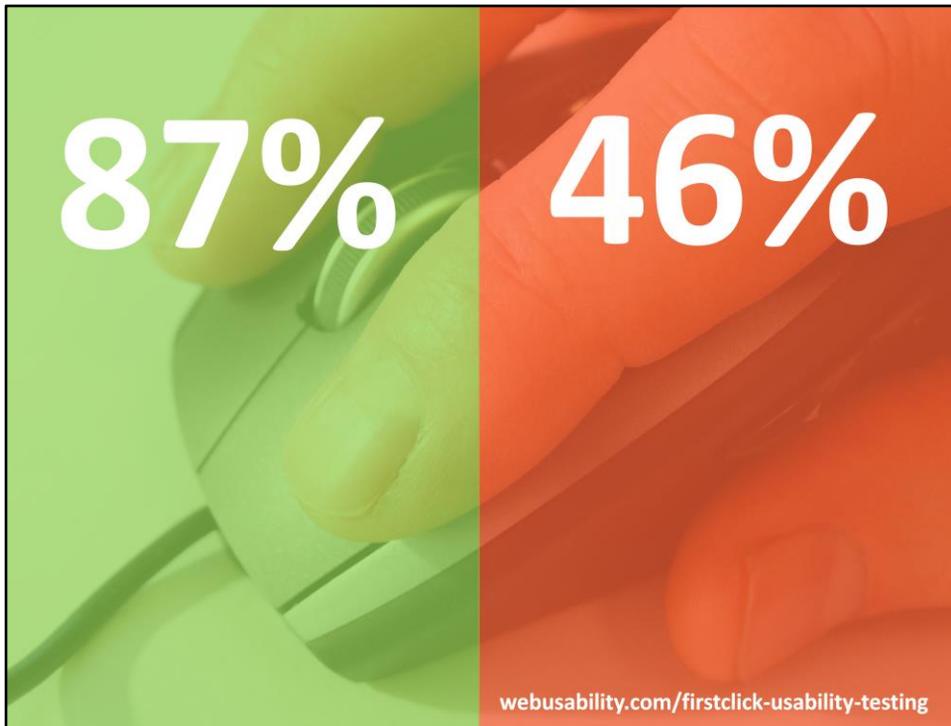
2. Click tests

Click testing helps determine if you've placed content in the correct areas. In a click test, the first thing you do is determine common tasks a person might do on your website. Such as, "You want to know if the Beaverton library is open."

Then you give participants a screenshot of a page on your site, often the homepage, and see if they make the correct first click.



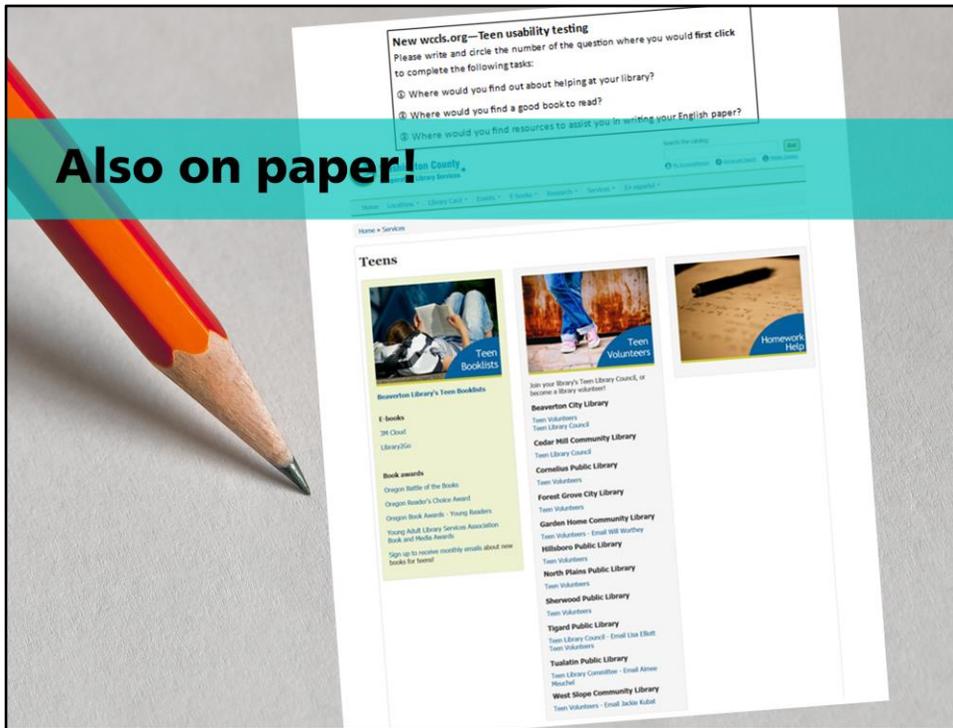
Here is an example from our Extranet project. For the task “You are looking for the WCCLS Directory,” we thought the content clearly belonged under Contacts. However, 26% looked under About WCCLS, which makes sense, too. And a few people would just search for it. In this case, we decided to keep it under Contacts, since 2/3 of participants placed it there. However, we’ve made many changes to content placement based on where people click first, because the research shows this is hugely important.



A participant who clicks down the right path on the first click will complete their task successfully 87% of the time.

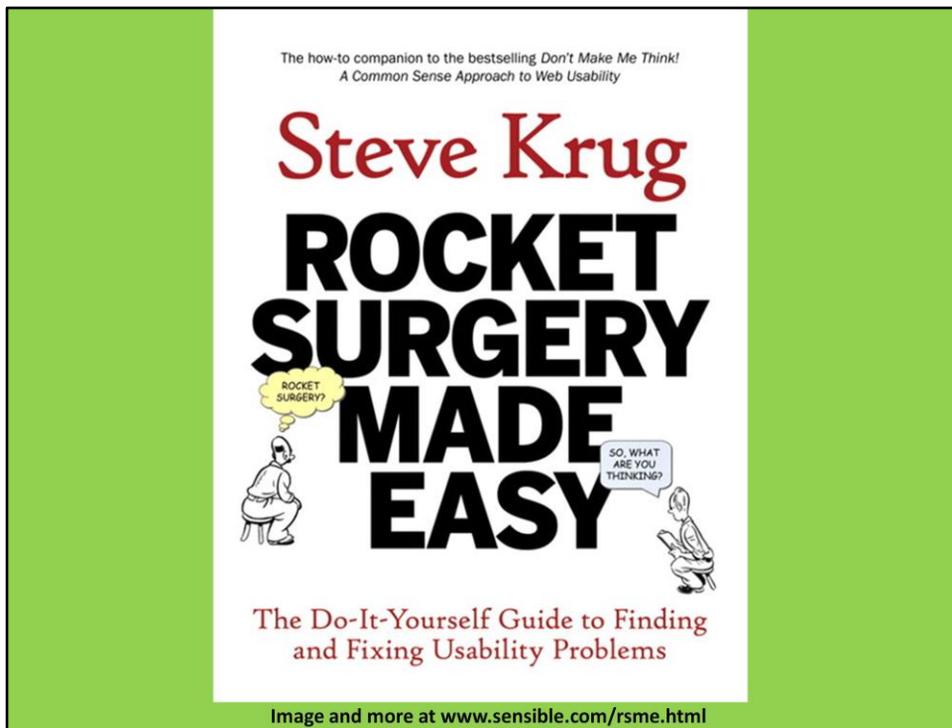
A participant who clicks down the wrong-path on the first click, tends to only successfully complete their task 46% of the time.

<http://webusability.com/firstclick-usability-testing/>



Also on paper!

We like the online product provided from Optimal Workshop, but we've also done paper click tests to try out wireframe ideas, or to reach a special audience. It works the same way, except you ask people to mark where they would click.



Since he's the expert, we're going to watch an abbreviated (6 minute) version of him showing how it's done.

The entire video can be found on his website, www.sensible.com/rsme.html.

While you watch the video, I want you to think about how you could replicating this kind of testing with your own library website.

What did you think?

Show me – scale of 1-10 – how easy would it be to replicate this with your own website?

Turn to your partner and share: What did you like about it?

What do you think would be tricky about it? (i.e. wanting to help the person)



90%

Krug says that if you do this in-depth, casual type of usability testing with 3 people, you will find 90% of the usability problems with your website.

So far, WCCLS has used “rocket surgery” only a few times. We did use it early on with our previous website and found some easy wins to make summer reading information more accessible. And we’ve used it quite a bit informally, by grabbing a few co-workers to test something about our new Extranet.

This kind of usability testing can be difficult to determine helpful courses of action to correct issues. And since we’re not in a library building, we have to schedule time out of the office to do it. However, we are looking forward to using this method to see how patrons get to and navigate our databases, one of the trickiest tasks on our website!

Card sorts	Click tests	Rocket surgery
<p>Pros</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menu categories come from users • Fun test for users to complete <p>Cons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Really tricky analysis • Sometimes later click testing doesn't confirm card sort categories 	<p>Pros</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple to create test • Fast for users to complete <p>Cons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many times the numbers are split in two categories • Participants may not understand terminology 	<p>Pros</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural setting for testing a website • No special equipment or subscription necessary <p>Cons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a librarian, it's super hard not to offer help! • Can be difficult to find viable solutions to problems

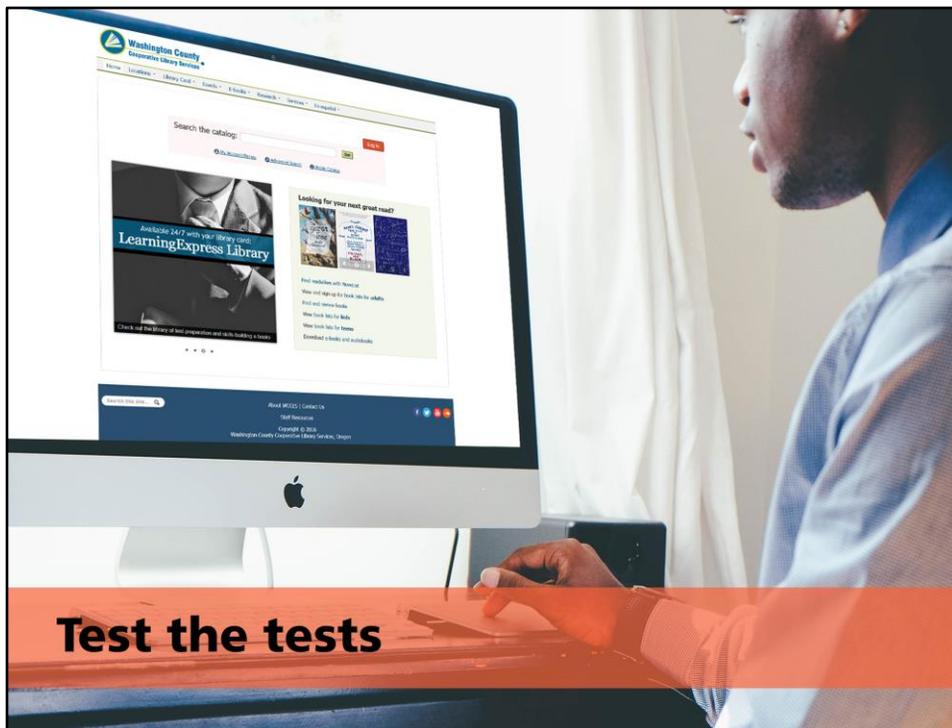
More pros and cons exist... this is just a short list!

Testing tips

And now a few tips that we have learned from our foray into usability testing.



Who do you need to ask before you do usability testing? Ask them their biggest concern with your site. Can they be your first guinea pigs? Or gather some data that clearly shows your return on investment.



Grab some co-workers or friends and have them take your first draft. They will point out what's confusing or too tricky. This allows you to improve the test before "real" participants take it, giving you better end results.

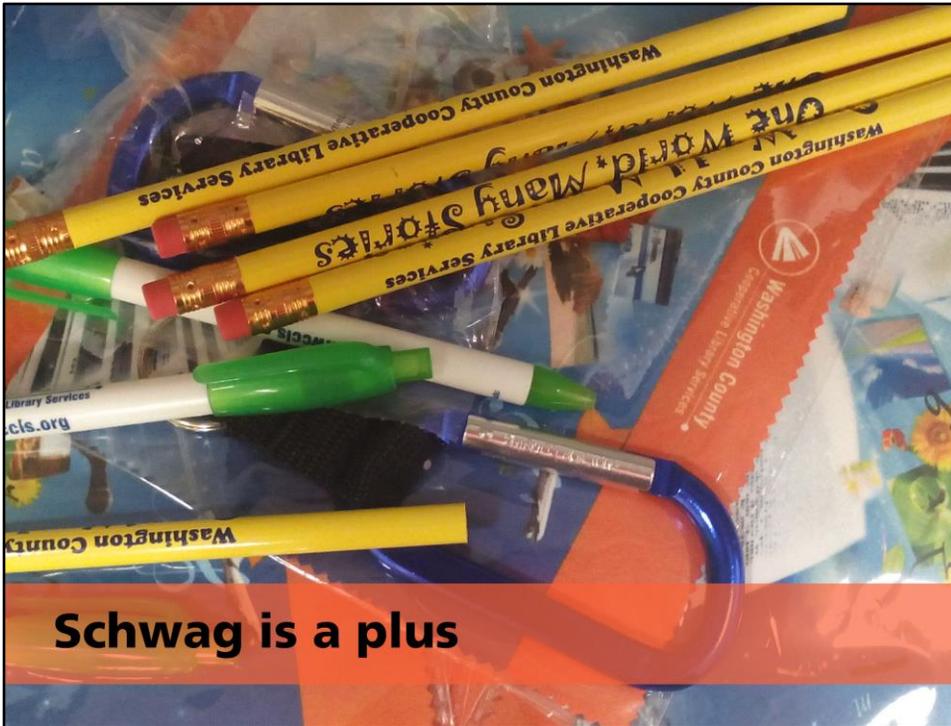


Similarly, for online tests, we create a short URL (using smartURL.it) so that we can change the test as needed, based on participant feedback.

For example, in our early card sorts, we were enthralled with the category “download it” to indicate e-books. We quickly learned participants were very confused by this category, so I created a new test with an alternate category of “e-books,” which proved to be exactly what our users needed. This means we got two tests for the price of one!



This made a huge difference for us for our online tests, as well as for asking for volunteers to do live card sorts.

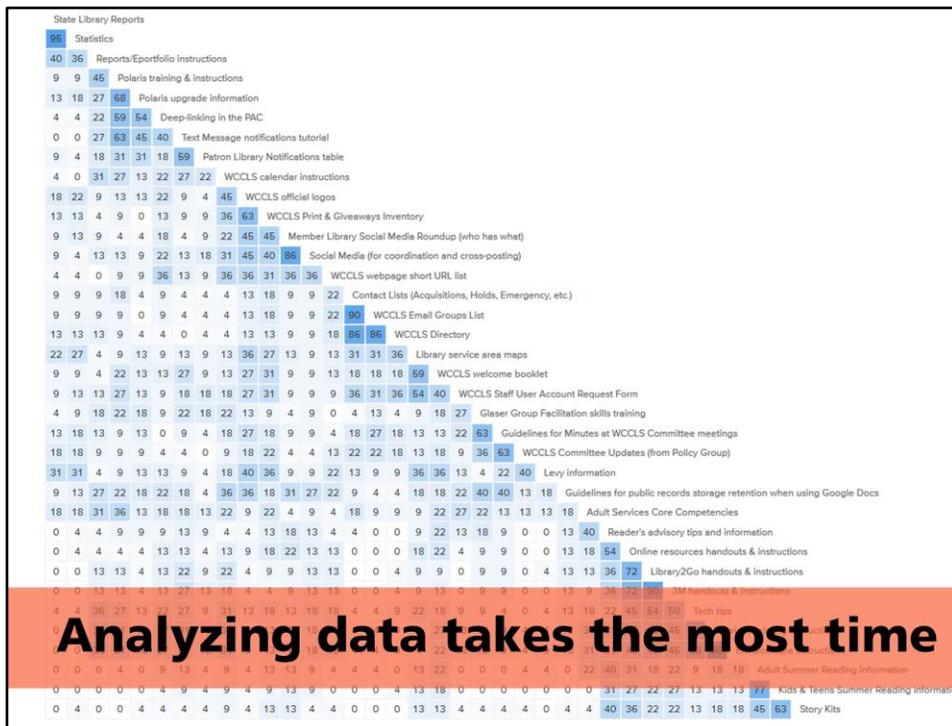


For longer tests, consider schwag or small prizes and snacks. Your library may have rules for monetary rewards.

We announced our live card sorts as a volunteer opportunity, but still provided small incentives.

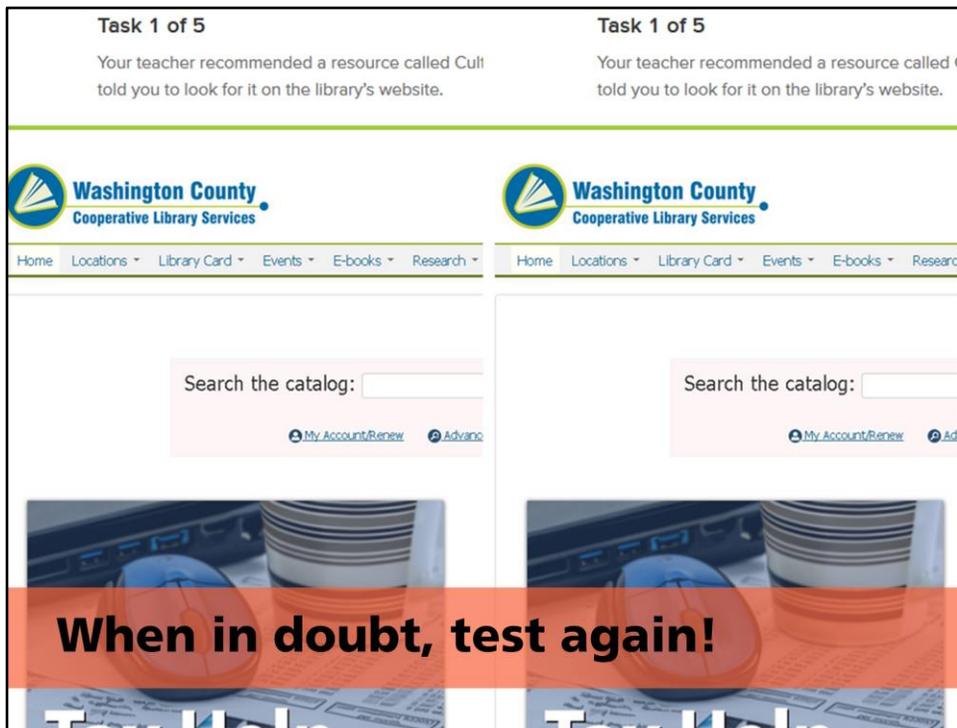


Shorter tests give you more results. It's better to do multiple short tests over time than one big test. This means you are constantly making small improvements, which is better for your website, and more sustainable for you.



By far, the most time is spent AFTER you complete the usability testing. What do you do with the results?

With OptimalWorkshop, they do some of the analysis for you, giving you handy charts like this one. But it still takes quite a bit of staring and thinking. I generally look at the results over several days to make sure I'm interpreting the data correctly.



If you're still not sure after all that analysis, just test again. Usability testing shouldn't be a one-and-done proposition, but something that seamlessly fits into your website maintenance plan. It's low cost, and yields huge benefits!

Our maintenance plan: We broke the content of our site into monthly chunks. We review one chunk each month, checking against our collection development guides and any content providers. And we have the option to do usability testing when we've received feedback related to that content.

For example, we just finished up some click testing with teens for our homework help page. I'm still looking at the results, but I've already gained valuable insight into how teens want to search, and which interface helps them the most.



I hope you can see now how simple it is to get some easy wins for your website through usability testing.

Please send me an email if you have any additional questions or want to share your good success with usability testing. Thank you!